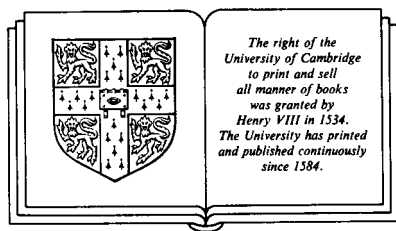


THE PROVINCE OF BUENOS AIRES AND ARGENTINE POLITICS, 1912-1943

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1

Introduction

Physically, Buenos Aires is Argentina's largest province. Covering an area of 188,446 square miles, approximately the size of Italy, Buenos Aires contains 10 percent of the total national territory. Although the province approximates to Italy in size, its topography is dramatically different. The predominant physical feature is the stretch of grassy plain known as the pampa. The pampa, in turn, can be divided into three distinct regions. In the center, and taking up almost two-thirds of the province, are the low-lying pampas, blessed with a combination of temperate climate, fertile soil, and abundant rainfall, which make it one of the world's richest and most productive agricultural regions. To the north are the rolling pampas, whose soft undulations provide some break in the flat monotony of the plains. To the south are the *tosca*, or rough pampas, marked by rockier soil and two small mountain ranges, one running from Tandil to Mar del Plata (the Tandil Hills) and the other clustered north of the port city of Bahía Blanca (the Ventana Hills).

Within this space some important social and economic changes have occurred in the twentieth century, changes with profound implications for the province's political history. Some of the most important of these changes were demographic. Between 1895 and 1947 the population of the province quadrupled, from one million to four million persons (see Table 1.1). Two great waves, coming from different directions and at different times, largely determined growth and settlement patterns. The first wave originated in the east and was composed of foreign immigrants, mostly from Europe. Beginning in earnest in the 1880s, this wave funneled through the city of Buenos Aires and out onto the pampa. Annually, tens of thousands of new inhabitants settled in Buenos Aires until government restrictions dried the flood of new arrivals to a trickle in the 1930s. Overall, between 1857 and 1941 the province received the greatest number of immigrants of any area in the country, some 2,095,696.¹ The impact of immigration was such that the third

national census of 1914 showed that foreigners represented one of every three of the province's inhabitants (see Table 1.1). The census also identified over 57 different nationality groups in the province, but the most important were Italians (285,016) and Spaniards (273,755), who combined made up almost 80 percent of the foreign contribution.²

The second great wave began in the 1930s and continues into the 1980s. The direction was from the north and west to the east, primarily to the city and suburbs of Buenos Aires. Attracted by employment opportunities, in these decades hundreds of thousands of Argentine-born migrants moved from the interior to the coast. Many came from other provinces, but a substantial number also were from within the province of Buenos Aires itself. Their arrival and settlement, combined with the gradual production of Argentine-born sons and daughters of European immigrants, reduced the foreign-born proportion of the province's population to 781,208 of 4,272,337 by 1947 (see Table 1.1).

Both waves contributed to rapid urbanization. Their greatest impact was on the growth of Greater Buenos Aires, or those *partidos* immediately surrounding the federal capital (see Figs. 1.1 and 1.2).³ From 1914 to 1947 the combined population of these *partidos* grew from 458,217, or 22.2 percent of the provincial total, to 1,741,338, or 40.8 percent of the total (see Table 1.1). Other centers also experienced great expansion. The provincial capital of La Plata, a bureaucratic-university city, more than doubled its population from 100,981 to 207,031 between 1914 and 1947. The seaside resort of Mar del Plata grew dramatically from 27,611 to 114,729 permanent residents during the same period. Bahía Blanca, a principal center for grain exports, saw its population leap from 49,511 in 1914 to 112,597 in 1947. Overall, over 70 percent of the province's inhabitants were in urban areas by 1947, as compared with 55.3 percent in 1914, percentages significantly higher than for the republic as a whole.⁴

Much of the urbanization which occurred from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s was related to a marked increase in industrial activities, particularly in Greater Buenos Aires. Between 1935 and 1946 the number of industrial establishments in Buenos Aires grew from 10,385 to 23,745 and the number of persons employed in these from 128,278 to 326,623, with the most significant increases occurring in Greater Buenos Aires.⁵ Even with substantial industrial growth, however, the main focus of the province's economic activity remained in agriculture, where Buenos Aires enjoyed a dominant national position. Throughout the twentieth century, for example, about 40 percent of all the republic's sheep and cattle were bred and raised in the province. Buenos Aires also

generally has been the nation's leading producer of wheat, corn, oats, and barley.⁶

These developments produced changes in provincial social structure. Most important in political terms was the growth of the middle sectors. Table 1.2, constructed from occupational data in the third national census, shows an already significant middle class (27.2 percent of the total) in the province by 1914. Although the fourth national census does not provide comparable data, Argentine sociologist Gino Germani calculated that by 1947 the middle (and upper) classes of Buenos Aires represented a little over 40 percent of the total; the 'popular' classes a little under 60 percent.⁷

Despite changes in the middle, the top of the social-economic pyramid remained much the same. The undisputed masters of Buenos Aires were the province's large landowners, its *estancieros* and *hacendados*. Their power derived from ownership and control of the province's principal productive resource and the concentration of that resource in a few hands – the classic Latin American pattern of the *latifundio*. The third national census showed that just over 12 percent of the total of all individual holdings were of 500 hectares or more and represented more than 70 percent of the total area of Buenos Aires. A review of holdings in 1958 found that concentration had changed but little over almost half a century; 8.4 percent of all holdings were in properties of 500 hectares or more and represented 57.5 percent of the total area.⁸

The extent of the domains of the province's largest land-owning families was legendary. Jacinto Oddone estimated that in 1928 the top fifty *estanciero* families in the province combined owned 4,663,575 hectares, or almost 17 percent of all the land.⁹ Most of the major landed fortunes were created in the nineteenth century. Two principal groups took part in this process. One was composed of families with roots in the colonial period. A second group was made up of nineteenth-century European immigrants, many from humble backgrounds, who combined daring, skill, and industry to amass large estates and to leave immense wealth to their families. One of the most successful was a French Basque, Pedro Luro, who arrived in Buenos Aires in 1837 at the age of seventeen with only a few francs in his pocket, and who, when he died, according to one source, '... left to his fourteen children 375,000 hectares of land, 300,000 sheep, and 150,000 cattle, then valued at 40,000,000 francs.'¹⁰ A similar tale was that of Ramón Santamarina, the son of a small farmer in Galicia who arrived in Argentina in his twenties and gradually established a vast landed empire centered in Tandil.¹¹

Much of the profit that the great landholding families made was

plowed back into the land or went for the purchase of luxuries. In the *campo*, or countryside, these were displayed most clearly as adornments to and in the construction of elaborate estate residences. Increasingly in the twentieth century, however, the owner and his family used these estates only infrequently, usually in the summertime. Most *estancieros* preferred permanent residence in the city of Buenos Aires to life on the monotonous and isolated pampa. Estate management was left to administrators, or *mayordomos*, usually English or German, while the owners lived in mansions in the federal capital every bit as sumptuous, if not more so, than those on their *estancias*.

In the capital, most members of the provincial landed elite resided close to one another in a concentrated area. Their residences, in turn, were within walking distance of two of the principal male social and eating clubs where *estancieros* spent much of their time; the prestigious and exclusive Jockey Club on Calle Florida, the city's most fashionable street, and the even more prestigious and exclusive *Círculo de Armas* on Calle Corrientes. Between these two clubs were the headquarters of the Sociedad Rural Argentina (SRA), or Argentine Rural Society, on Calle Florida. The Sociedad Rural had been formed in 1866 to promote and protect the country's agricultural interests and until the 1940s was generally controlled by the large landholding sectors of the province of Buenos Aires. Although the society claimed to be apolitical, many of its leaders and members were also important provincial and national governmental leaders. Moreover, as a lobbying group, the SRA enjoyed considerable success in influencing national and provincial policies which were seen to affect the interests of its members.¹²

Whether residing in the city and wielding his influence indirectly through his *mayordomo*, or in the countryside directly, the *estanciero* was clearly the absolute lord of his domain. On his property, his word was law and he served as the *patrón* for all who lived and worked on his estate. On a large *estancia* this could include several hundred people engaged in a wide variety of occupations. Moreover, as the *estancia* was the predominant institution on the pampa, the influence of the estate and its owner often extended beyond the rural boundaries of agricultural activity into the small urban centers where the *estanciero* often enjoyed immense social prestige, economic weight, and political power.

Not all the *estancieros* of the province, however, were owners of huge estates which employed large numbers of people. Many possessed 'small' (200 to 1,000 hectares) or medium-to-large holdings (1,000 to 5,000 hectares). Generally, this group was composed of the descendants of the immigrant land barons of the late nineteenth century, who, although

sharing many of the characteristics of the larger estate owners, nevertheless saw themselves as distinct from and sometimes opposed to the traditional landed families.

While *estancieros* owned much of the province's land, those who actually worked it were most often tenants, or *colonos*, who rented the land from the owners, worked it by contract for a certain length of time, and then moved on. Despite the fact that few renters became owners, the number of tenants grew steadily between the 1910s and the 1940s.¹³ Enduring the demanding and isolated working and living environment which drove others to urban areas, many tenants eventually began to enjoy a modicum of prosperity. Gradually, small farmers – *agricultores* and *chacareros* – along with small-town businessmen, shopkeepers, school-teachers, journalists, government bureaucrats, and a handful of doctors and lawyers, came to form a growing middle class in the province's rural regions to complement a similar group in Greater Buenos Aires and the larger interior urban centers.¹⁴

At the bottom of the social scale, both in urban and rural areas, were *jornaleros* (day laborers) and *peones*. The 1914 census counted 271,979 persons over the age of fourteen as so designated, representing about a third of all those who listed an occupation. In 1914 almost 60 percent of the number were foreign-born and 97.5 percent were male.¹⁵ In the countryside, this group, which provided the manpower to care for the herds, harvest the crops, and perform whatever menial tasks were required, lived a transient and uncertain existence subject to seasonal demands and the whims of their *estanciero* employers. In the cities, *jornaleros*, combined with factory workers, artisans, service personnel, transport workers, *stevedores*, and others, helped to constitute an expanding urban working class. Although the census data do not allow precise estimates, the overall growth of industry and increased urbanization between 1914 and 1947 strongly suggest that this group grew significantly too, particularly from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s.

Social-economic change, along with electoral reform in 1912, substantially altered the size and shape of the province's electorate. Parallel-ing overall population growth, the number of registered voters in the province rose from 232,000 in 1912 to 892,557 in 1942.¹⁶ During this period very few foreign-born immigrants became naturalized citizens and hence eligible to vote.¹⁷ However, gradually their Argentine-born sons did reach the required voting age. Their addition to the rolls served to increase the proportion of the total population eligible to vote, from a little over 11 percent in 1912 to approximately 22 percent in 1942.¹⁸

Thanks to the spread of public education, literacy in the province of

Buenos Aires increased from 67 percent of the population over the age of 7 able to read and write in 1914 to a little over 91 percent (over the age of 14) in 1947.¹⁹ The same rate of increase could be noted among voters, from about 70 percent literate in 1916 to almost 90 percent in 1938.²⁰

The impact of change on the social structure of the electorate over time is more difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, the data for Argentine males (those eligible to vote) from the 1914 census, presented in Table 1.2, provide useful information for the beginning of the period under consideration. As the table shows, almost one out of every three voters belonged to the 'menial' category. Most of these were the 108,852 Argentine day laborers and peones listed in the census. The next largest group was composed of skilled workers, men primarily engaged in construction work – bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, painters, and ironworkers. The next two largest groups were the 'rural skilled' and the 'low non-manual.' The first was composed mainly of 30,193 Argentine agricultores and chacareros and the second primarily of 27,388 native-born government employees. The 'middle non-manual' was made up mostly by 13,234 *comerciantes*, or merchants and small shopkeepers, and the 'high non-manual' of 9,140 *estancieros* and *hacendados*. In sum, in 1914 some 62 percent of the provincial electorate was working-class, almost 31 percent middle-class, and 7 percent upper-class (see Table 1.2).

Again, the fourth national census does not provide data which allow for a comparison over time. Nevertheless, the overall growth of the middle class, as well as the expansion of the urban working class, undoubtedly affected the quality of the electorate in the same manner as the total population. Anthropologist Arnold Strickon, examining the voter registries of a rural partido in central Buenos Aires, determined that between 1928 and 1957 the size of the middle class of the electorate grew from 10 to 25 percent of the total between these years.²¹ Middle-sector growth among the electorate in more urban partidos must have been even greater.

Political leaders in the province were well aware of the general outlines of the social composition of the electorate and of its changing nature. All parties sought to tailor their policies, programs, and campaigns to appeal to the provincial constituency. Especially important was the support – or control – of the single largest bloc of voters, day laborers and peones. Even with the growth of the middle classes, the backing of these voters remained the principal target and goal of all parties. But with social and economic change, politicians also realized

the increasingly important role in elections of other groups, particularly small farmers, merchants, bureaucrats, and factory workers.

Between 1912 and 1943 two dozen political parties sought to appeal to the expanding and changing electorate in the province of Buenos Aires. With the occasional exception of the Socialist party, however, most had little success. Instead, two major parties dominated politics in the province. One of these, the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), emerged partly as a result of the social and economic changes described above. The Radicals enjoyed particular strength in the province because, as a creature of these changes, they were able to capture the support of new groups, articulate new interests, and flow with rapidly shifting social and economic conditions. Their principal competitor, the Partido Conservador, on the other hand, experienced more difficulties in adjusting to change, difficulties which manifested themselves most clearly in party differences over tactics and direction in response to new situations. Despite these problems, the Conservatives often managed successfully to mix traditional approaches to political activity with more modern techniques and to provide the Radicals with stiff competition throughout this period.

The Radical party was formed in the 1890s as a protest movement against the centralized, tightly controlled governments of the late nineteenth century. Taking up arms against the national government in 1890, 1893, and 1905, the Radicals called for honest elections, expanded suffrage, efficient administration, and respect for provincial autonomy. From its inception the UCR enjoyed a strong base of support in the province of Buenos Aires. This was largely due to the personal popularity and organizational efforts of the movement's founder, Leandro Alem, and those of the party's principal leader from the late 1890s to 1933, Hipólito Yrigoyen. Under Yrigoyen's direction the Radicals generally abstained from electoral participation until 1912, in protest against the existing fraudulent and corrupt political system. In the 1890s, however, the Radicals did enter electoral contests in Buenos Aires and in 1898 the moderate wing of the party helped to elect Bernardo Irigoyen (no relation to Hipólito Yrigoyen) as governor of the province.²²

The Conservative party had its roots in the very system which the Radicals opposed. From the second half of the nineteenth century the men who led this party were firmly associated with the national governments of the period, governments which oversaw a lengthy period of political stability and rapid economic expansion. Radicals charged

that a small, closed group of men – the ‘oligarchy’ or, in Radical terminology, the ‘regime’ – controlled politics in this period, making decisions which affected national interests without consulting other groups and with little regard for established governmental or political institutions.²³

The first decade of the twentieth century saw a disintegration of the dominant political machine and the group which had governed the nation for the past half-century. It was against this background that many of those associated with the ‘regime’ in the province of Buenos Aires in 1908 decided to form a new party, the Partido Conservador de Buenos Aires. In their initial manifesto, the organizers of the party pledged ‘... to struggle for high democratic ideals’ and to achieve their aims ‘... by means of honest suffrage, honest administration, and responsible legislation ...’ The manifesto was signed by over 1,400 men, mostly landowners, professionals, and national or provincial office-holders.²⁴

The confrontation which evolved between Radicals and Conservatives in the early decades of the twentieth century was often passionate, bitter, and bloody. And in their confrontations the two groups often emphasized and underscored their differences. Nevertheless, in certain respects they were remarkably similar. In terms of organization, for example, both parties had more or less the same structure. Ultimate authority rested with a convention of elected representatives which was called regularly to select candidates for office, delineate programs, and to discuss matters of general party administration. This administration was the responsibility of a provincial committee, chosen by the convention to oversee day-to-day party affairs. Below the provincial committee were sectional committees responsible for matters in each of the large electoral sections into which the province was divided.²⁵ The most important unit of party organization and activity was the local committee, or *comité*, found in most of the partidos of the province. Party leaders, who usually were also important elected officials, manned and directed these committees, which were established either in or close to the main plaza of the principal city of the partido.

In addition to providing a base for political activity, the local comité also often served an important and related social function. It was in comité headquarters that actual or prospective party affiliates would meet to converse, eat, drink, and, particularly in the province of Buenos Aires, engage in various forms of gambling. Gambling, which was persistent and widespread, in turn served to fill party coffers, to support campaigns, which were often quite expensive, and on occasion to buy

votes directly. Vote-buying and gambling were most often associated with the Conservatives, but the Radicals also were known to employ games of chance to attract adherents and to raise funds.

Both parties sought to project a nationalist, *criollo* image as organizations firmly rooted in the Argentine historical experience and well-steeped in national traditions. These characteristics were most prevalent when Radicals and Conservatives campaigned in the countryside. There they sought to relate to the values and practices of the rural populace. Conservatives tried to include in their pre-election rallies a contingent of horsemen decked out in gaucho gear and wearing distinctive red berets, the symbol of the party in Buenos Aires. The Radicals, who sported white berets, sponsored rodeos, folkloric dancing and singing, and horse races as part of their efforts to attract support. Both parties depended heavily on *asados*, or country-style barbecues, featuring *carne con cuero*, fresh beef cooked in the skin, and ample quantities of wine as important ingredients of pre-election activity. Conservatives sometimes complained that country folk came to enjoy their free food and drink, promised their support at the moment and then, later, in the privacy of the voting booth cast their ballots for the UCR. These voters were called *rabanitos*, or little radishes; red, the color of the Conservatives, on the outside, but white, the color of the Radicals, on the inside.

The *criollo* cast of both parties did not incline them to seek to enroll the foreigner into their ranks. In the first decades of the twentieth century there was clear resentment on the part of many native-born Argentines against the immigrant.²⁶ There is little evidence that in the province either Conservatives or Radicals actively sought to accentuate these tensions, but neither did they seek to assuage them by encouraging the integration of the foreigner into the political process. The low number of foreigners who became naturalized citizens attests to this failure, but it should also be noted that many foreigners seemed basically uninterested in politics and would have had little inclination to become naturalized citizens even if so encouraged by the province's two major parties. On the other hand, the *criollo* image of Conservatives and Radicals probably stood both parties in good stead when appealing to the Argentine-born sons and grandsons of the immigrants, who might reject their European origins and associate with native traditions and institutions.

At first glance there seem to have been few basic differences of principle and program between the Radicals and Conservatives. Neither party sought any drastic changes in the basic social-economic structure of the province or the nation. Both parties favored an evolutionary,

conciliatory approach to most national problems and rejected concepts of class conflict and class antagonism. Both, too, had important populist and nationalist elements manifest in theory and practice.

Before continuing, however, it is important to note that the Radical reluctance to articulate a clear and precise program hinders any discussion of the ideological similarities and differences between Radicals and Conservatives. Radical campaigners, in the province, often did stress certain issues of the moment, although exact positions were often buried in a mass of rhetoric. Generally, the Radicals professed to support the Constitution, democracy, electoral and administrative honesty, and equal opportunities and rights for all citizens. Moreover, they sought to infuse whatever position they took with a strong ethical and moral tone, implying that most opponents were inherently corrupt and dishonest and that it was only among the Radicals that austere, selfless republicans could be found. Despite pressures to take a firmer and clearer programmatic position beyond these general propositions, Radicalism always retained a vague quality which made it difficult to define. This vagueness fitted in well with what many Radical leaders saw and sought to nurture as the essential character of the UCR – an entity that was more a mass movement, in Radical terminology a ‘regenerative’ movement, than an organized political party of the type associated with the ‘regime.’ Radicalism, they argued, appealed to the heart and to sentiment rather than to the head and to strict reason.

The Conservatives, like the Radicals, championed defense of the Constitution and democratic procedures. With regard to these matters, however, there were some important disagreements within party ranks and clear differences in theory and practice from the Radicals. In 1911 and 1912 a conservative president, Roque Sáenz Peña, largely in response to Radical pressures, oversaw an important set of electoral reforms which made voting obligatory for all Argentine males over the age of eighteen, introduced the secret ballot, allowed for minority representation in Congress through proportional representation, and established procedures whereby the federal government could assure the regularity and honesty of the electoral process. After the Sáenz Peña electoral reform became fact, most Conservatives eventually adapted to that reality and agreed to play the political game more or less within the established rules. The majority of the party’s spokesmen continually stressed their support for what they called political democracy. But within the party there remained elements skeptical of the Sáenz Peña law, arguing that it had moved the country too far and too fast along the road to universal manhood suffrage without adequate safeguards to

assure that the voters were fully prepared and fully competent to exercise their civic responsibilities maturely and reasonably. Skepticism grew as elections after 1912 increasingly produced Radical victories, victories that in the eyes of many Conservatives meant the triumph of demagoguery and the 'undisciplined' masses. Eventually, some Conservatives, disillusioned with the democratic experiment, opted for authoritarian solutions and some form of corporatist governmental system. Most Conservatives supported and many participated in the military coup which overthrew democratically-elected President Yrigoyen in 1930. Conservative identification with the widespread political fraud in the decade that followed made continued professions of democratic faith ring rather hollow.²⁷

Within the two parties, disagreements over programs and principles helped to produce some serious schisms and fragmentation. So, too, did tactical disputes, personality clashes, ambition for office, maneuvering for advantage, and power struggles. Generally, the Conservatives had a greater image of solidarity and cohesiveness as a party than did the Radicals. Nevertheless, as will be seen, ferocious in-fighting between leaders who sought to dominate the party – and their followers – characterized much of the history of the Partido Conservador in these years.

A major difference between the two parties was their respective relationship to larger national entities. The Radicals of Buenos Aires, although they had their own organization and often sought to establish their own provincial character, were nonetheless always part of and subordinate to the national UCR and subject to the decisions of the party's national convention and the directives of the national committee. Also, for the first three decades of the twentieth century, Buenos Aires Radicalism usually responded to the wishes of the acknowledged national leader of the party, Hipólito Yrigoyen, who was twice (1916–22, 1928–30) president of the republic during this period. The Conservative party, on the other hand, was a more autonomous, provincially-based and provincially-directed organization. This was especially true in the 1916–30 period when the Radicals controlled the national executive and there was no dominant conservative figure at the national level. Nor was there a national conservative party in these years, although the Conservatives of Buenos Aires did periodically join in coalition with other parties from other provinces, usually to support candidates in presidential elections. In the 1930s a more long-lasting and more formal national conservative party, the Partido Demócrata Nacional (PDN), or National Democratic party, was formed. The

Partido Conservador was an important component of this new organization and changed its name accordingly to Partido Demócrata Nacional of Buenos Aires. In this decade, too, the Buenos Aires Conservatives often responded to the wishes and orders of President Agustín Justo (1932–1938). Nevertheless, the PDN was more a loosely-organized federalist coalition than a well-integrated national party. Within this coalition the Conservatives of Buenos Aires often went their own independent way. Many leaders and rank-and-file members adhered only grudgingly to the PDN, and it was not uncommon in the 1930s at party rallies to hear cheers for the 'old and glorious Partido Conservador de Buenos Aires' rather than for the new National Democratic party.

Unfortunately, few data are available as to the number and composition of the rank-and-file membership of either party over the length of the period under study. With regard to numbers, Radical leaders estimated a ratio of one party member to every four votes the UCR won in the province. This approximation is borne out, for example, for 1931, when some 45,000 Radical party members participated in internal elections and the UCR gained 218,283 votes in gubernatorial elections that year.²⁸ A PDN document a few years later reported that party membership had grown from 73,955 in 1932 to 121,519 in 1934.²⁹ In national deputy elections for 1934 the PDN gained 175,641 votes (see Appendix). These figures indicate that a higher proportion of Conservative voters were actual party members than was the case among Radicals. However, critics accused the Conservatives of coercing many voters to join their ranks and contribute to their coffers, and membership frequently may have been more involuntary than spontaneous. Whatever the membership figures, both parties were aware of a sizeable independent group of voters in the province, a group which often determined who would win or lose elections. In almost every campaign Radicals and Conservatives explicitly acknowledged the existence and importance of the independents and tailored their appeals accordingly.

In terms of the social composition of the two parties, the Radicals have been perceived generally as the party of Argentina's growing middle classes and the Conservatives as the party of the traditional upper classes. In general terms, these impressions hold true for the respective parties in the province of Buenos Aires. However, recent scholarship has shown that in addition to its middle-class complexion, the UCR, particularly in its early years, also had significant numbers of *estancieros* and other upper-class elements among its leaders and supporters. Some of these *estancieros* came from the older, established families in the province,

others from the newer first- and second-generation immigrant groups.³⁰ Radicalism, it is claimed, had particular appeal for small- and medium-sized landowners, who believed that the large *estancieros* and *hacendados* who dominated the Conservative party did not adequately represent their interests. Conservative leadership, as will be shown, was predominantly upper-class and did essentially reflect the interests of the large landowning families. However, among prominent Conservatives could also be found a fair number of middle-class professionals and politicians from even more humble backgrounds. The social composition of both parties, then, was somewhat more heterogeneous and complex than general impressions might indicate.

A quantitative analysis of the political elite of the province of Buenos Aires provides useful general information on the nature of that elite and the social composition of the leadership of the two main parties. The data tend to confirm general impressions, but also to suggest some of the complexity and heterogeneity of the two parties. This analysis is based on biographical material on provincial executives and those elected from the province to the national Chamber of Deputies and the national Senate between 1912 and 1943. These men generally also served as the leaders of their respective parties in the province, holding the most important positions on party directive committees. The variables considered were place and date of birth, previous political office, particularly service in the provincial legislature or other local posts before being elected to provincial executive or national legislative positions, occupation, membership in the *Sociedad Rural Argentina*, membership in the Jockey Club, and social status.³¹

All but one of the provincial executives and two of the national deputies were native-born Argentines. These results graphically underscore the failure, reluctance, or inability of the massive foreign-born population to enter into key political positions. Moreover, among the executives, 52 percent were born in the city of Buenos Aires, only 27 percent in the province itself. Among national senators, 55 percent were *porteños* (inhabitants of the city of Buenos Aires), 45 percent *provincianos* (of the provinces). Among national deputies, who represent the great bulk of the population studied, the differences were somewhat less, 47 percent born in the capital and 45 percent born in the province. The Radicals had a greater percentage of their national deputies born in the province (54 percent) than did the Conservatives (40 percent).

These findings underscore the prominence of the capital city in the political life of the province of Buenos Aires, a prominence based on history and proximity. Although the federal capital was not jurisdic-